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PASTORAL LETTER

OF

His Lordship the Administrator,

*To promote the Worship of the Blessed Virgin, in the Church of Our
Lady of Victories, of the Lower Town of Quebec.*



CHARLES FRANCIS BAILLARGEON,

By the mercy of God, and the Grace of the Holy Apostolic See, Bishop of Tloa,
Administrator of the Diocese of Quebec.

*To the Clergy, Secular and Regular, and to all the Faithful, in the
Diocese of Quebec, greeting, and Benediction in the Lord :*

We bless the Lord, Dearly beloved brethren, for the signal favour conferred on us when he mercifully condescended to place the Cathedral and the Diocese of Quebec under the patronage of his most Holy Mother. Hence we deem it one of our most sacred obligations to stimulate and to preserve within your hearts a sincere devotion towards the Immaculate Virgin Mary, and a lively gratitude for the manifold blessings which our beloved country owe to her Mediation. We were filled with joy when lately we contemplated the zeal and generosity manifested by our fellow

citizens in repairing and restoring the ancient church of our Lady of Victories, that standing monument of the tender devotion of our ancestors towards their august and powerful patroness. May the God of Mercies and source of every good gift who inspired them with the holy thought, reward a hundredfold the offerings of their piety given for the restoration and decoration of the emple, in which for so many years past, we have honoured his blessed Mother.

But the children of Mary, whose pious liberalities renewed and adorned her cherished Sanctuary, were anxious to enjoy the happiness of contemplating the mild and sweet image of their good mother, and it was in conformity with the desire of their filial affection, that the venerable Archbishop, on the 23rd October last, consented to bless, with solemn pomp, and to place on the throne prepared for the occasion, the statue of the merciful Virgin, at whose feet the poor in their misery, and the repentant sinner are ever sure to obtain protection, refuge, and succour.

Oh! how great was the joy of the pious and worthy prelate, seeing the dense crowd of the faithful thronging round the altar of Mary, during the imposing and affecting ceremony; how the paternal heart of the Pastor overflowed with consolation while thus beholding, in the midst of his dearly beloved flock, a spectacle of devotion towards the Most Holy Virgin worthy of the ages of faith, the happiest ages of the church! With what lively emotions did he not feel the full force and truth of the prophetic words which the humblest of the daughters of Israel uttered when having become the mother of God, she pronounced, under the influence of the extatic gratitude and love of her soul—*Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes*. Behold henceforth all nations shall call me blessed, and shall bless me. *Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est*: Because the Most High has looked down on the humility of his handmaid.

Yes, she is justly entitled to all our blessings—to all our confidence, the humble and holy Virgin, whom God himself has blessed amongst all women, and whom he has raised above all angels, by choosing her to be the mother of his divine Son! What could he refuse to her, after having thus given to her, his only beloved Son? And could the divine Jesus reject the prayers of Mary, whom he loves as the mother who bore him in her womb, who suckled him with her milk, who watched over his cradle, who nursed his infancy, who followed him in the

wearisome journeyings of his evangelical missions, who shared in the sufferings of his passion, and whose soul was transpierced with a sword of grief at the foot of the cross?

Is it not through the mediation of Mary, that God has visited and redeemed his people? *Quia visitavit et fecit redemptionem plebis suæ.* Is it not by her instrumentality that he gave a Saviour to the world? Is it not from her virginial womb that he appointed his mercy should flow with so much exuberance over all mankind? And having thus seen fit to give us once Jesus, through Mary, shall not this his established order subsist for ever? For the gifts of God are without repentance. It is, and therefore ever will be true, that having once received, through her, the universal principle of grace, we also receive, through her agency, its divers applications, according to the different exigencies of the Christian life. Her maternal charity having, to so great an extent contributed to our salvation in the mystery of the Incarnation, the universal principle of grace and Salvation, she must eternally contribute to it in all the operations of the same grace, which are nothing more than its results and consequences.

Wherefore we see that the church, in her infancy, firmly convinced that Mary, owing to her credit with God, is truly the gate of heaven, put herself under her powerful protection, manifested the greatest confidence in her, and constantly invoked her as her patroness and advocate with Jesus.

The primitive Christians and the faithful throughout all ages, who, from the bosom of the church had sucked in, with the faith and love of Jesus, the same sentiments of devotion towards his holy mother, and of confidence in her protection, deemed it their bounden duty to celebrate her power and her glory by the numerous festivals instituted in her honour, vied with one another in their zeal, to erect altars, to consecrate temples, under the invocation of her name, and were never wearied in praying to her, as the Mother of Mercy, *Mater misericordæ*, to intercede for them during life, and especially at the awful hour of death, *Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis nunc et in hora mortis nostræ.*

The Saints, from time immemorial, penetrated with filial love and the most tender devotion towards the blessed Virgin, gave the most constant proofs of zeal for Her service and perseverance in their supplications, that she would vouchsafe

to exert in their behalf, Her Motherly influence with Jesus : *Monstra te esse matrem.*

In fine, all the Fathers and all the Doctors of the Church are unanimous in teaching that under the benignant influence of Mary's name, none need despair, that it is impossible that a servant of Mary can ever perish ; and the devout St. Bernard has no hesitation in declaring, in the name of all : Remember, O most pious Virgin, that it is unknown and unheard of, that any of those who have had recourse to thee, imploring thy succour, has ever been forsaken. *Memorare, O piissima Virgo, non esse auditum quemquam ad tua recurrentem præsidia, tua implorantem auxilia..... esse derelictum.....*

From old France, solemnly consecrated to Mary, the devotion towards the blessed Virgin was imported by our forefathers into this, their new country. In the presence of the perils they had to encounter in a savage land, they hastened to place themselves and families under her protection. Champlain and his companions, kneeling together, on the spot where now stands the Church of Our Lady of Victories, in the first place offered up solemn thanksgivings to Mary, the auspicious Star of the Sea, who had guided their vessel and safely conducted them to port ; they afterwards besought her, that she would prove herself a mother in their regard amidst the dangers which they felt would beset them in a barbarous land ; that she would take under her holy care and safe keeping the nascent and feeble Colony, which was about being settled down, in the midst of infidel and ferocious hordes.

From this moment, the devotion towards the Holy Virgin seemed to be closely connected with this site, where also was said, in one of the apartments of Champlain's house, serving as a temporary Chapel, the first Mass that ever was celebrated at Quebec, after the arrival of the children of St. Francis in 1615.

Desirous to place this site under the protection of religion, and to promote at the same time devotion towards the Blessed Virgin, his Lordship the Right Rev. De St. Valier, second bishop of Quebec, laid in 1688, the corner stone of the Church of the Lower Town, which was afterwards dedicated under the invocation of our Lady of Victory, in consequence of a vow made by the ladies of Quebec, while the City was besieged by the English forces in 1690. To the especial pro-

tection of Mary, was attributed the defeat and hasty retreat of the enemy from before the small French army, composed almost entirely of recruits levied in the yet feeble colony.

The remembrance of the deliverance of Quebec, was still fresh in the minds of all its inhabitants, when suddenly in 1711, intelligence was brought to them, that a hostile fleet of thirty-four vessels were coming up the river, for the purpose of besieging the City again. Prayers and supplications were reiterated, many pious souls renewed the vow they had made twenty years before, and it is an historical fact, that a kind of judicial blindness seemed to confuse the councils and minds of the commanding officers ! for not only did a dense fog and a tempestuous hurricane prevent the fleet from sailing to any safe haven, and baffled all the ingenuity of the mariners ; but in opposition to the advice of the pilot, who had made forty trips on the river and asserted that it was impossible to avoid its dangerous currents, when the fog shut out the view of the land, the admiral ventured to proceed, nor did he desist after being exposed to the greatest dangers, until he lost eight transports and nine hundred soldiers, who all were wrecked on the sunken rocks of the North shore.

If we may be allowed to discover no miracle in an event which proved so disastrous to the mariners and so favorable to the City threatened with the horrors of a siege ; those who were under the awful expectation of such a cruel visitation and saw themselves relieved from the impending danger unexpectedly and against all hope, were undoubtedly fully authorized to attribute their deliverance to a supernatural intervention. Wherefore, to perpetuate the remembrance of so signal a deliverance, it was resolved, with one voice, that the title of the Church where the supplications to Mary had been crowned with such a happy result, should be changed from *Our Lady of Victory* to the more appropriate appellation of *Our Lady of Victories*, changing the singular number into the plural.

From this period, the Church which reminds the faithful of this country, of the great favours obtained from God, by the intercession of the Holy Virgin, was always considered to be the chosen and privileged sanctuary where she takes delight in showering down more abundant favours on her children, and still continued to be visited by those who desired to obtain from God, through her intercession, some

signal favour or special grace. There the poor and the wretched seemed to have an easier access to her throne of mercy; there she seemed to hearken more attentively to their humble prayer, and to be more favourably disposed to exert her powerful influence in their behalf.

These facts were attested by the votive offerings still hanging on the walls at the commencement of this century; for all these *ex votos* were so many authentic monuments of signal favours, granted by God within the walls of the Chapel through the intercession of Mary.

On five different occasions, the Blessed Virgin protected and preserved her sanctuary in a miraculous manner, when conflagrations with the violence of a torrent burst over and around the sacred edifice, threatening its imminent and certain destruction. On each occasion when the fury of the devouring element had subsided, the Church of *Our Lady of Victories* reappeared, entire and uninjured, in the midst of the smoking and smouldering ruins, to the great astonishment as well as joy of the citizens, who had given up all hopes of saving it from total destruction.

We feel great pleasure, D. B. B., in recalling to your memory these facts, which are not only glorious to the Mother of God, but serve also to show us the zeal of our forefathers for the worship of the B. V. If, in these latter times, their remembrance seems to be somewhat obliterated from your minds, it is our duty to awake and call your attention to them, that your confidence in the sweet and merciful Virgin may be renewed, and that you may be induced to implore Her protection and assistance in the sanctuary which She seems to have chosen in the midst of us, to establish there the throne of Her mercies and to distribute Her favours.

Why would you not avail yourselves of the graces which She only wished to diffuse abroad among Her children? Why would you neglect so easy a means of paying honor to Her, and of securing Her powerful protection? Why would you entertain the slightest diffidence or doubt in her charity? If hitherto She has ever proved herself so favorable to the faithful who come hither to honor her, how could She refuse or neglect your requests?

It was with the view of rewarding the piety of your forefathers, and of glorifying and stimulating the courage of the zealous missionaries, who, before their de-

parture for the countries of the *Hurons* and *Iroquois*, which they fertilized by their sweat and their blood, entered into Her Church to pay Her their homage, to place their apostolic labors under Her powerful protection, that She constantly evinced Her merciful compassion, Her tender goodness, and unbounded liberality.

Bring then hither, as they did, the same feelings of lively faith, of unlimited confidence in her prayers, and of her tender love for Jesus, and the prodigies of her charity will be renewed in your regard, and the blessings of heaven will be showered down as copiously on you as they fell on them. For the power and the mercy of our God are not exhausted, nor are the credit and charity of his divine Mother abridged.

Does not this idea seem to be suggested by the blessed Virgin herself, when she inspired her pious clients to place her image in the sanctuary of the church already renowned by her favours? Was it not moreover inculcated by the imposing solemnity of the inauguration of the noble statue of Mary—holy and affecting ceremony which seemed to dedicate and consecrate over again her sanctuary, at the time when the August Head of the Church, by revealing to the Christian World, the glory of the Immaculate Conception, invited all the faithful to renewed and increased love and confidence towards her? Ought you not to experience those sweet and soothing feelings, when entering into the church, you behold the bright image of the blessed Mother, holding in her arms her divine son Jesus, the principle and author of grace, who seems to declare that it is through her that he intends to bestow them, that her hands are filled with them, and that she is there to distribute them?

Yes, D. B. B., you may and ought to believe that this statue, the just tribute of your gratitude and veneration towards the blessed Virgin offers you a new pledge of her protection over yourselves and over your families. Placed in the shade of the formidable ramparts that crown and defend your city and country, her sweet and endearing features will be to all a guard and defence more secure and more durable than all fortifications.

Come, then, all ye servants of Jesus, children of Mary, prostrate yourselves at the feet of the sweet image of your dear mother, come with love and confidence to tender your homage, and to implore her assistance. In this time-honored sanctu-

ary as in her palace, the Queen of heaven and earth holds her court, awaits your visit, and invites you to draw near to her. Here, her eyes will be open to the view of your miseries, her ears attentive to the voice of your prayers. Here, she will always be ready to enlighten you, to fortify you, to relieve you, to comfort you, and to bless you.

Come, ye mariners rescued from storm and shipwreck, and return thanks to Her for having saved you from impending danger, pray to Her that She may not cease to protect you, and above all to shield you from the enemies of your salvation, who beset your steps in port, and threaten your souls with eternal destruction.

Come, ye wayfarers of every age and condition, to beseech Her that She may guide your footsteps and lead you safely and auspiciously to your journey's end. To what dangers are you not exposed in the midst of the numerous scandals and temptations that lie in wait for your innocence, in the heart of our large cities and even in the market places. Oh, prostrate yourselves before Mary in Her sanctuary, conjure the mother of purity, the guardian of innocence, to watch over your souls and to preserve them from the fatal contagion of sin.

Poor wanderers, unfortunate exiles, who are seeking for a new home, come, enter into this temple, you may for a moment forget that you are strangers in this world, you will there meet with a compassionate mother, whom the Church calls the life, the hope of pilgrims and travellers, on whom it devolves to console the exiled sons of Adam in this valley of tears.

And you, also, members of the Temperance Society and of the confraternity of the Cross, are you aware of the trials and dangers to which your fidelity is exposed when you enter the city? Have you reflected on the numerous snares which the demon of intemperance has set for you? Have you not learned, by the fatal experience of your own frailty, or by the hideous spectacle afforded by the weakness and unfaithfulness of others, that you run the greatest risk of being taken by surprise and falling a prey to the enemy, if you are not constantly on your guard and powerfully protected by Heaven? Oh, how much you stand in need of the succour of Mary! As soon as you arrive in town direct your steps to the temple of Mary,

and beseech Her to strengthen you, to surround you with Her protection, and to preserve you from lapsing into intemperance.

Oh! it is particularly for you, Members of the Confraternity of the Cross, that Mary has preserved and holds in reserve a treasure of light and of strength, and Her charity invites you to come and draw from Her stores with confidence. Oh, what blessings and graces you forfeit, and to what dangers you are exposed, if you neglect Her amiable invitation! Oh, what shame and disgrace if you prove faithless to your temperance pledge! What an insult to the Mother of Jesus, whose thirst was slaked with gall and vinegar to expiate our excesses, if, in the face of Her Church, in the presence of Her altars, at the feet of Her image, and, as it were, under Her eyes, you betake yourselves to the debasing excesses of intemperance, and thus become a subject of scandal to the people of the town and country! Ah! we beseech you to shun so great a misfortune by putting yourselves under the safe keeping of Mary.

Strangers, whoever you are, or whithersoever you come from, on your arrival in this city, remember you are entering into the demesnes of Mary, into a city of which She is the Patroness, the Lady and the Princess, that She resides and holds Her Court here, where she cheerfully receives all strangers and travellers, where she even invites them to come and be presented to Her—reflect also that she is a noble Lady, that she is beneficent, charitable and powerful. Whatever be your fears or your hopes, your joys or your woes, your necessities of body or soul, your sufferings, your afflictions or your temptations, She has the power and the will to relieve them, if you will but consent to visit Her and implore Her assistance. Oh! do not fail to go and salute Her on your arrival, in order to pay Her your homage, and to obtain Her protection, and also at your departure to solicit Her blessing.

Citizens of Quebec, to you has been given the honour of having Mary for your Queen and your patroness: you have the happiness of being, in an especial manner, her clients and her children. She expects to receive from you signal proofs of your respect, your love, your devotedness, and your homage; you have also peculiar claims on her protection and succour. Your piety has erected in her honour the church of our Lady of Victories; the construction of this sanctuary is indeed the work of your fathers, but its recent restoration and decoration, together with its

magnificent statue, are the fruits of your liberality and zeal for the glory of Mary. It is therefore incumbent on you, above all others, to honour her in this sanctuary. To you is given the privilege of gathering the first fruits and choicest favours she wishes to bestow on her children. On you, above all others, devolves the obligation of displaying your zeal and fervour in her behalf, by your visits to her temple, and your assiduity in paying to her the grateful tribute of your devotion. To you it should be a constant practice, never to pass before her Sanctuary, without entering to visit her, and offer her your homage.

To induce, as far as in us lies, you and all the faithful who occasionally visit Quebec, to honour, according to our expressed views and intentions, the Blessed Virgin, in her church of our Lady of Victories, in the Lower Town, after having invoked the holy name of God, we have declared, and do hereby decree, what follows :—

1. In the name of the City and Diocese of Quebec, whose venerable Pastor we now represent, we dedicate and consecrate anew this Church to the Blessed Virgin, as an eternal monument of our gratitude for her protection and blessings, of our joy and of our hope, on the auspicious occasion of the publication of the solemn decree of the Immaculate Conception in this province.

2. It is our wish and desire, that this venerated Sanctuary be resorted, to as a place of pilgrimage, by all the faithful who may be anxious to obtain any special favour through the intercession of Mary; and we implore her, in our capacity of Pastor of Souls, to condescend to hearken to their vows and supplications.

3. We re-establish, in the aforesaid Church, the Festival of our Lady of Victories, which will be celebrated with the rite of a double-major festival, as hitherto, on the Sunday before the 22nd October; its celebration will be duly announced both in this Church and the Cathedral, on the previous Sunday.

4. We appoint the fourth Sunday of each month for the solemn Benediction, hitherto observed on the 25th of each month.

5. For the greater convenience of citizens and pilgrims, we desire that a Low Mass be celebrated on Sundays, festivals and week days, at 7 o'clock in Summer, and between 7 and 8 in Winter.

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6. We grant 40 days of indulgence to the faithful for every time they shall visit the Church and shall with contrition of heart recite three *Hail Mary's* according to our intentions which are : the propagation and preservation of our Holy Faith, throughout the Ecclesiastical Province, and principally throughout this Diocese.

7. We designate the Church of our Lady of Victories, in the Lower Town, as the first among all churches after the Cathedral, wherein may be gained, on the four principal festivals of the Blessed Virgin, the plenary indulgences granted in behalf of the *pious sodality of the immaculate Conception* under the name of the *Golden crown*, which we hereby erect in all the parishes of this diocese, and we exhort the members of the Clergy, of the religious houses and all the faithful, to join themselves to the association, as an excellent means of imprinting in the hearts, and preserving among us the memory of the solemn publication of the dogmatical definition of the Immaculate Conception of Mary; and also, of honouring the blessed Mother of God in this glorious privilege, so dear to her heart, and thus to secure her powerful protection.

In order that the Parish-Priests and Missionaries may be enabled to excite the faithful intrusted in their care to enter this pious confraternity, we send, with the present letter, a sketch of the object, rules and advantages of the Society.

This, our present Pastoral Letter, is to be read at the *Prone* of Mass in all the Churches and Chapels wherein is celebrated Divine Service, the first or second Sunday after its reception.

Given at the Archiepiscopal Palace of Quebec, under our signature, the Seal of the Diocese and the counter-signature of our Secretary, the first day of May, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-five.



† C. F. BISHOP OF TLOA,
Administrator.

By his Lordship's command,
EDMOND LANGEVIN, Ptre.,
Secretary.